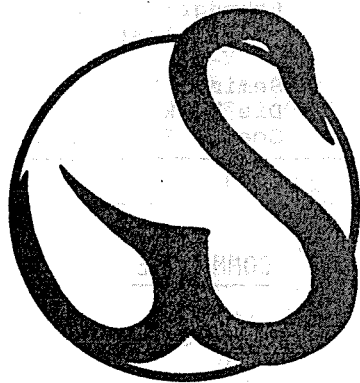


The Wagner Society

IN NEW SOUTH WALES INC.

Registered Office: 141 Dowling Street, Woolloomooloo 2011
Telephone enquiries: 358 1919 (Bus. Hours)



Newsletter

No. 34 February, 1989.

Registered by Australia Post Publication No. NBH5028

PATRON: SIR CHARLES MACKERRAS
HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS: Mr WERNER BAER M.B.E.
Miss RITA HUNTER C.B.E.
Miss LEONIE RYSANEK
Professor MICHAEL EWANS

COMING EVENTS

Sunday, February 19th	Rienzi Video Goethe Institute.	1.00p.m
Sunday, March 19th	Parsifal (C.D) Goethe Institute.	1.00p.m
Sunday, April 16th	Tristan and Isolde(C.D) Goethe Institute.	1.00p.m
Friday, May 19th	Annual Dinner Menzies Hotel	7.30p.m
Sunday, May 21st	Annual General Meeting Goethe Institute followed by Video of Das Liebesverbot.	1.00p.m
Sunday, June 18th	Lohengrin (C.D) Goethe Institute	1.00p.m
Sunday, July 16th	Seminar Day Die Walküre. Goethe Institute.	9.30a.m

COMMITTEE

President	Richard King	358 1919
Vice President	Olive Coonan	271 3666(B)
Secretary	Clare Hennessy	747 5664
Membership Co-ordinator	Annette Marshall	042 94 2992
Treasurer	Murray Smith	358 2763
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Editors	Jessie Anderson Keith Anderson	449 8801
Committee	Margaret Budge	521 6097
Functions Sub-Committee	Leonard Hansen Olive Coonan Keith Anderson Jessie Anderson Margaret Budge	326 1793 271 3666 449 8801 449 8801 521 6097

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

All subscriptions are now due and payable before April 1st.

AN URGENT MESSAGE FROM YOUR COMMITTEE

Beginning this year we are faced with a new and significant cost to maintain the level of entertainment that members have previously enjoyed at the Goethe Institute, which has always been made available to us free of charge during the last seven years. Now the Management of the Institute has felt it necessary to cover their ever-rising costs, especially fluctuating values of the exchange rate, by charging \$100 per function.

We must accept this as being reasonable and still competitive with charges at other venues, which would not be as suitable for our type of functions. The Committee feels that members would want to maintain the cultural link that we have established with this organisation.

In the past we have generally managed to cover expenses from the donations made by members and visitors during the afternoon. As the amount collected in the past will not now cover costs, we must canvas the suggestion that if members wish to continue this type of entertainment, either more people need to attend or more generous donations need to be offered by those who can afford it. Failure to do this will result in a weakening of our ability to financially support the fundamental aims of our Society. The situation will be reviewed at the completion of the functions announced in this newsletter.

BAYREUTH BALLOT



- PILGRIMS - TO - BAYREUTH -

Once again we were unsuccessful in our application for a block booking for the 1989 season in Bayreuth. However through our membership of the Friends of Bayreuth we received two sets of tickets for the seven operas on the programme. In the ballot for these tickets held at the Gallery on 17th January Mr T.O'Brien was the lucky "winner" to the delight of those who have always been grateful for the way he rolls up his sleeves and helps at so many functions.

Enjoy yourself Trevor!

NEW MEMBERS

The Society would like to welcome the following new members who have joined during the last quarter:-

Mr Per Uth : Ann Maria O'Leary : Ann Casimir : John Buncel.

DONATIONS RECEIVED DURING LAST QUARTER.

The Society would like to thank the following members and friends who have made donations during the previous quarter:-

The Consulate-General of the Federal Republic of West Germany: Mr. K. Baldenhofer: Mr. I. Davidson: Miriam Harris: Francis J. Harvey: Dr. Susan Kelly: Jennifer Littman: Mrs. Betty Maloney: Dr. Judith Nicholas: Lady Potter: Shirley Robertson: Miss Jean Whitehouse.

TWO EARLY WORKS

DAS LIEBESVERBOT. (The Ban On Love).

Richard Wagner on his second opera: "On a lovely summer journey in the Bohemian forests (in the year 1834) I made a sketch of a new opera, "Das Liebesverbot". I was twenty-one years old at the time and of a pleasure-seeking and joyful disposition. Germany seemed to me to be a very small part of the world. I had emerged from abstract mysticism, and learnt to love the material things of life. The beauty of materials; wit and intellect were wonderful things for me; in music I found them both in the Italians and the French. I abandoned my model - Beethoven. Everything around me seemed to be in ferment; it seemed to be the most natural thing in which to take part...The fruit of these impressions and moods was the opera "Das Liebesverbot oder: Die Novize von Palermo". ("The Ban on Love or The Novice of Palermo"). I took the subject from Shakespeare's "Measure for Measure", which I freely adapted, in accordance with my mood, to an opera libretto. The tenor of my interpretation was directed against puritanical hypocrisy and thus lead to an audacious glorification of "free sensuality".

Das Liebesverbot is by no means a tragic opera even if tragic elements appear. Wagner himself, described it as a Grand Comic Opera. This work was completed in January, 1836, and received its first performance in Magdeburg on 29th March, 1836.

RIENZI.

(Also known as "Der Letzte der Tribunen". (The Last of the Tribunes). Completed in November, 1840.
First performed in Dresden Hofoper, 20th October, 1842.

Based on the "Mazzini of the Fourteenth Century" (Coladi Renzo 1313-1354) who endeavoured to bring the Italian States into unity and form a democratic government.

Mayerbeer was so impressed with this music that he gave Wagner a letter of introduction to the Paris opera, although ultimately it was not produced there.

The first performance was enthusiastically received by the Dresden audience even though it began at 6 p.m. and ended at 11.15 p.m. - a very long evening by the standards of the day. Wagner wanted to split the work into two parts for successive evenings, but this did not eventuate. In 1843 he made a revised, shortened version which is the form used for the infrequent performances to this day.

This opera shows Wagner displaying a more independent style than Die Feen and Das Liebesverbot, and is a logical step in his compositional maturity.

People who attend on the days these operas are presented will each be given a synopsis. Librettos, however, may not be available, so if you have your own copy you are advised to bring it along.

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

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**CHARLES MACKERRAS:
A MUSICIAN'S MUSICIAN**

by Nancy Phelan

On 24th September, 1988 at approximately 11.45 p.m. applause and bravos erupted as the curtain fell on the opening performance of Die Meistersinger von Nurnberg in the Sydney Opera House. This was the very novel gift of the people of the Republic of West Germany to all Australians for their 200th Birthday. We don't see nearly enough Wagner as Musical Directors of the Australian Opera have thought that there is not the community support for it. That Sir Charles Mackerras has been involved in most of the Wagner we do enjoy makes it quite appropriate that his biography, CHARLES MACKERRAS-A MUSICIAN'S MUSICIAN, by his cousin, Nancy Phelan, published by Oxford University Press be reviewed at this time, for though he orbits the world music scene like a comet, he is Australian - part of a large family - each member of which has distinguished him/herself in some way.

The home, where they grew up was large, comfortable, full of books, music and sporting equipment. The children were encouraged by their mother, Catherine to be individuals with one guiding condition- excel at whatever you do. Father, Alan, was the opposite in personality, withdrawn and introspective but setting a standard that the family really only appreciated in later life when as adults they grew closer. Mealtimes must have been astonishing to an onlooker- the exuberant children all talking at once - music (on old 78 r.p.m. records!) providing a high-decibel background.

These were the days when long distances had to be travelled to schools where Charles, always searching for the opportunity to be a musician, after much trial and error, finally was enrolled at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. Even then, he was the enfant terrible, considered arrogant, cocksure and a "know-all". There were not many opportunities to perform classical music then, so Charles' early experiences were mainly in small orchestras providing backing for commercial radio programmes of the talent quest type, where singers competed for prizes to enable them to study overseas. (Joan Sutherland was one of these and they are still very close friends). Charles became the Second Oboe in the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in 1943 at age 18 and Principal Oboe in the next year. He was brash and tactless and the man he replaced really believed Charles had engineered his downfall. He very slowly had opportunities to conduct and knew that this was what he wanted to do most of all. Reversing the usual story, he saved enough money to go overseas in 1947 to pursue his dreams. He was offered orchestral jobs almost immediately by Conductors who had visited Sydney and slowly he progressed. He did make one step though which was nothing short of miraculous. Later that year he met and married Judy Wilkins, an English clarinet player who has been the perfect partner, mother, secretary and supporter ever since. They went to Prague, Charles having won a scholarship.

It was his introduction to the Czech people, and especially the works of the Composer Janacek. That this music, operatic, choral and orchestral, is so well-known in the western world to-day, is directly attributable to Charles Mackerras, is universally acknowledged. Composed in an unusual musical idiom, it needed the understanding of a conductor who could train orchestras to play it, and the support of management willing to take a chance on its acceptance by the public and critics. Charles returns regularly to Czechoslovakia where he has been awarded many honours.

Early in his career Charles became aware of many "versions" of compositions then in vogue. On one of his early trips to Europe he visited the Library at Donaueschingen, where access to the original manuscripts aroused his interest. Charles is an intense scholar and from then on he has been a battler for authenticity - being true to the composer's wishes and directions. He regards himself as less important than the music itself. This has brought him into conflict with "stars" in opera who hold notes to draw attention to themselves and also producers whose concepts distort what he perceives is the intention of the composer, e.g. Chereau's Ring or Kupfer's Ring rather than Wagner's Ring. He has clashed with some very famous names in opera but he has also gained the respect of many others - a notable example being Dame Janet Baker who says quite simply "How much I owe this man!". Charles has never been the "Star" conductor, rather he has been willing, too willing some say, to conduct virtually anything. His diaries provide a startling catalogue of events. He has at most times been a Resident Conductor at the English National Opera, the Royal Opera House, Hamburg Opera or the Sydney Symphony Orchestra yet he still travelled constantly to conduct in other places, sometimes needing the help of the International Date Line when he conducted in Sydney and New York on the same day! He has had his share of illness and grief but the small number of cancellations, compared to the number of engagements he accepts, is remarkable.

Charles Mackerras grew up with Wagner. As each new baby arrived he was sent to stay with his grandmother who allowed him to play records which his grandfather, who had been a passionate lover of this music, had left behind when he died. His father had made a marionette theatre. Puppets of the Ring characters based on the Arthur Rackham drawings were made by the family. This memory has stayed with him and perhaps has made him impatient with modern symbolic interpretations. He now conducts Wagner with reverence for the composer and sympathy for the singers.

The book is in two sections, with an Index and a comprehensive Discography. Nancy Phelan tells her story in a straightforward manner. In the second section, Charles himself tells us of his findings in libraries throughout the world of how composers worked. Some used sketchy outlines which the performers could embellish as they chose. Others provided much more concise instructions. His chapters on Mozart, Handel and Janacek while giving insight into their methods of composing, also show us how deep is the musical knowledge of the author himself.

One day perhaps Charles Mackerras will try to calculate, using the gadgets he loves to buy at airports round the world, how much of his life has been spent in aircraft - a result which would probably astound him - yet he is still the down - to - earth Australian. He has a mild absent-minded- professor air about him which means that he is probably mentally conducting his next concert. He has been called many things - most of them listed in Chapter XXV and most of them true at some time for he is a very complex man. Nancy Phelan has given us a very fair assessment of Sir Charles Mackerras or Charlie until the age of 60, but like all biographies of people still alive, it is incomplete. He is capable of many more years of music making especially with devoted Judy by his side to care for his health and welfare. He is an Australian but he belongs to the world.

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

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A PARTICULAR VIEW OF TANNHÄUSER

by Donal Henahan
Special to the New York Times

We know that Wagner suggested that something different be done BUT:- Bayreuth is under fire from all directions after its 1988 series and there have been reports of some odd versions of the operas in California, Berlin and Munich. As Editors we would like to make the comment that we have not heard ONE criticism of the traditional version we have all enjoyed of Die Meistersinger. We include the following extract from the New York Times for your consideration.

Chicago Oct.11th.... A serio-comic opera might well be composed about the rise and fall of a sexually prone, spiritually supine television evangelist in the 1980's. If so, Peter Sellars, with his talent for exploring the sleazy side of modern culture, would be an ideal choice as director. But with no such contemporary opera at hand he was forced to spend his energies on Wagner's "Tannhäuser", which takes place in 13th Century Thuringia. On Monday evening, Mr Sellars struggled vainly to overcome that unfortunate circumstance in a new production for the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

This is a Tannhäuser whose lusty action takes place in a motel love nest. The traditional Hall of Song in Act 2 becomes a televised evangelical meeting presided over by a head preacher mysteriously known as Hermann the Landgrave, who is assisted by five born-again acolytes known by such bible-belt names as Wolfram and Biterolf. If in Act 3 you are expecting the valley below the Wartburg, think again: we are in an airline terminal waiting for Tannhäuser to arrive on a flight from Rome. The plane is late of course, and when the passenger finally deplanes he is in a drunken state, as sometimes happens on overdue flights. A series of scenic projections here, though, beside any Wagnerian point, lent a darkling beauty to the American Airlines tarmac.

It would be distracting if great Wagnerian singing were wasted on so weird a production. No worry there, though reasonably strong vocal contributions were made by Hakan Hagegard (Wolfram), Jan Hendrik Rootering (the Landgrave) and Nadine Secunde (Elisabeth). Marilyn Zschau, aptly pneumatic in a well-engineered body stocking, made a bleating Venus and Richard Cassily's honestly sung Tannhäuser matched her wobble for wobble. Ferdinand Leitner conducted Wagner's free-standing earlier version of the Overture, somewhat limply but had the Lyric Orchestra sounding splendid throughout.

To make his Tannhäuser correspond even remotely with Wagner's, Mr Sellars has had to subject the libretto to a rewrite job. So we hear (and read, for the text is projected in red, white and blue English supertitles) a strange mixture of authentic Wagnerian verse and 20th Century pop argot. Venus gets the zippiest lines as she attempts to keep the tortured hero in her clutches. "Sing it honey," she urges Tannhäuser, "Grab that harp!" And, "You got me hot and bothered." When the hero, torn between fleshly pleasures and the virtuous life, agonizes at length, she wants to know, "What's all this, melancholy baby?" Despairing of the whole affair, Venus lets Tannhäuser go with a curt "Hit the road, Jack" and "It's goodbye and amen."

Meanwhile the words pronounced by the singers were inexplicably in Wagner's own German. So, incongruities and contradictions piled one on another. One glaring example came at the end of Act 2 when Wagner has Tannhäuser, humbled and repentant, rushing off to Rome to ask absolution for his sins from the Pope, Mr Sellars had Tannhäuser

mumble the final words, "Nach Rome" (To Rome) with his back to the audience. In the final Act, however, the Rome problem was too great even for Mr Sellars to fudge. We were left with the eye-brow lifting oddity of a fundamentalist preacher going off to prostate himself before the Pope with the evident approval of his Bible-toting fellow sectarians.

This kind of directorial obtuseness mixed with cleverness is here and there worth a chuckle of admiration for its undiluted gall, but it quickly palls. The jokes serve chiefly to distract attention from the deep issues that Wagner raises in this most autobiographical of works. Mr Sellars version is so heavily parodistic that neither side of the question can be taken half-seriously. The suspicion of parody also arises in the director's inventive use of coloured surtitles: red for the sensual side of the argument, blue for the blue-nosed side, white for the neutral narrative. The device distracts the audience far more drastically than do ordinary supertitles. Mr Sellars uses titles as a gloss on Wagner's text, flashing up portentous phrases while the singer is silent, in effect as an interior monologue. If he intended to satirize the practice of captioning operas, he succeeded in that, at least.



A German cartoon of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 refers to the Paris "Tannhäuser" fiasco, depicting Wagner as the "Generalissimo of the German Army" whose music will cause the French to take flight.

DIE MEISTERSINGER VON NÜRNBERG TELECAST

The Society would like to give "Full Marks" to the Australian Broadcasting Commission and the Australian Bicentennial Authority for the excellent telecast on 8th and 15th January of the Australian Opera's production of Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg. All those of us fortunate enough to see the opera last year re-lived the excitement and felt again much satisfaction about so many aspects - singing; conducting; acting; direction; stage sets; costumes and lighting. We hope those seeing it for the first time felt the same way.

Opera on video is a different medium because of the much smaller perspective which gave us such thrilling close-ups as when Donald McIntyre (whose sponsorship by us all was so well acknowledged at the end!) in Act 2 was musing about Walther's song, or John Pringle's facial expressions and the detail of the Festival activities to name just a few. The F.M. sound was excellent. CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL!

*
* BOOK EARLY FOR DIE WALKÜRE - MANY WERE DISAPPOINTED LAST YEAR! *
*

ANNUAL DINNER.

Our Annual Dinner is always a highlight of the year, and this year promises to keep up the standard. It will be held on 19th May, at 7.30 p.m. again at the Menzies Hotel which your committee feels looks after us very well indeed. We want a big attendance to greet our Guest of Honour, the Marker, Sixtus Beckmesser, himself, John Pringle. He was delighted to accept our invitation so come along and give him the big welcome he deserves. He will sing for us, and tell us about his opera career and then perhaps choose the winner of our Guessing Competition. Application form is at the back of this newsletter.

GUESSING COMPETITION.

Please note the book of guessing competition tickets included in this newsletter. Their cost is \$1.00 each ticket. Prizes are:-

- FIRST PRIZE: Two premium tickets for Die Walkure on 12th August. Value \$166.00.
- SECOND PRIZE Framed Stage Design from the Frank Hinder 1958 Lohengrin collection.
- THIRD PRIZE Framed Wagnerian Print.

JOTTINGS FROM OVERSEAS.

The following items from overseas newsletters, journals etc may be of interest to members, especially those who plan to travel.

English National Opera plans to present Elijah Moshinsky's production of Die Meistersinger on 13th May, 1989. Cast includes Gwynne Howell as Sachs: Alberto Remedios as Walther: Jane Eaglen as Eva: Alan Opie as Beckmesser: and Bonaventura Bottone as David. Conducting will be shared by Mark Elder and Peter Robinson.

Felicity Lott, surely one of the most radiant voices in the world will sing Eva at Covent Garden in the spring of 1990.

Scottish Opera will present Das Rheingold on 4th February, 1989.

Norman Bailey will sing Wotan in Die Walküre for Scottish Opera early in 1990 in what many hope will be a new Ring Cycle - but nothing is confirmed as yet.

The Ring Cycle will be performed in Warsaw from March 13 - 20, 1989 and also from May 5 - 12, 1989.

In 1989 Munich also has a Ring Cycle on offer from 28th May to 4th June which features the current most popular Wotan - James Morris as well as Hildegard Behrens; Cheryl Studer; Kurt Moll; and Rene Kollo.

Wagner News, the newsletter of the Wagner Society in England lists some very interesting talks, discussions recitals etc which would be of great interest to Australian visitors. Why not contact the Editor, Mr Martin Hunt, 8 Whitelands Avenue, Charleywood, Hertfordshire WD3 5RD Tel: 09278 2081 and find out if you could fit these events into your travel plans?

JOURNAL OF THE SOCIETY.

The Journal, called WAGNER IN AUSTRALIA (FANGET AN ISSUE), containing the papers presented by the speakers at the Seminar on Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg held on 11th September 1988, will soon be ready for sale after all the unexpected delays we have encountered.

We thank the eighteen people who took advantage of the pre-publication discount price. Their copies will be distributed as soon as we receive them from the printer. We have not yet received all accounts, but like all things to-day it seems that the price will have to be considerably higher than we had hoped.

This is a 128-page quality journal, which, we understand will be recommended as a text-book for a course of study being given at Sydney University Department of Germanic Studies later this year.

DONATIONS TO THE WAGNER SOCIETY

Date

The Secretary,
The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust,
P.O.Box 137,
King's Cross N.S.W. 2011

Dear Sir,

Please find enclosed cash/cheque OR CHARGE MY
BANKCARD No.
MASTERCARD No.
DINERS CLUB No.
AMERICAN EXPRESS No.
VISA CARD No.
EXPIRY DATE

for \$ representing my donation to The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust.

This donation is given unconditionally. However, it would be appreciated if when considering your appropriations to the performing companies preference in the allocation of this donation could be given to

THE WAGNER SOCIETY IN N.S.W. INC.

.....

Signature Please print Name

and Address Post Code.....

OR

I have made this donation on behalf of my company.

Signature Title

PLEASE PRINT NAME AND ADDRESS OF COMPANY

We would ask you when making your donation in this manner to please send your cheque, made payable to the Wagner Society's Official address for processing before it is passed on to the A.E.T.T. Thank You.

SEMINAR - DIE WALKÜRE

The Wagner Society
141 Dowling Street
Woolloomooloo. 2011.

I/We wish to attend the Seminar on Die Walküre on Sunday, 16th July at the Goethe Institute from 9.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.

ADMISSION: \$18.00 (members) #21.00 (visitors).

Names of members.....

Names of visitors.....

Closing Date: 7th July, 1989.

Please enclose a S.A.E. if receipt required.

.....

APPLICATION FOR THEATRE PARTY TICKETS FOR DIE WALKÜRE.

The Wagner Society,
141 Dowling street,
WOOLLOOMOOLOO. 2011.

I would like to makereservations for Die Walküre on 12th August, 1989. I have enclosed a self-addressed envelope for return of tickets.

Number of tickets in "A" RESERVE at \$63 each.....

Number of tickets in "B" RESERVE at \$45 each.....

Name.....Membership No.....

.....

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

The Wagner Society,
141 Dowling Street,
Woolloomooloo. 2011.

I wish to renew membership of the Wagner Society in the following category:-

- () \$20.00 Ordinary Membership (Annual Subscription)
- () \$35.00 Joint Membership- (Annual Subscription)
- () \$10.00 Pensioner/ Under 25 (Annual Subscription)

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL IS DUE ANNUALLY ON APRIL 1ST.

Mr/Mrs/Miss.....

First Name Surname (Block Letters)

Membership Number.....

Address.....

.....Post Code.....

Telephone.....(Day).....(Evening)

If under 25 please include birth date.....

If pensioner please quote number.....

I/We enclose cheque/money order, payable to the Wagner Society.

Signature..... Date..... Amount.....

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